



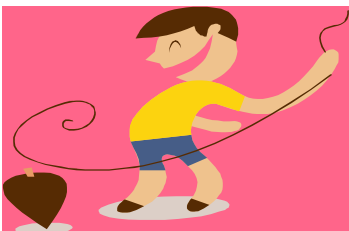
# Primary Press



## Toy Safety



The gift giving season is upon us and everywhere you go, you are surrounded by advertisements for toys, clothes, electronics and gadgets. It can be very overwhelming! The toy aisles are packed with thousands of eye-catching selections. Choosing a toy that is both fun and safe can be a daunting decision. Here are some tips to help you give safe and fun toys this year.



### Age

Almost all toys have a recommended age sticker on the front of the packaging. Toys intended for children

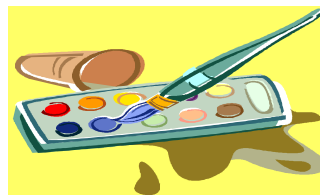
over age three should never be given to infants and toddlers. These toys may have small parts which could cause a choking hazard for young children. Children under the age of three should not be given toys with cords or strings longer than 12 inches, which could be wrapped around a child's neck.

### Quality

Look for well-constructed toys. Make sure stuffed animals have reinforced seams and securely sewn buttons and eyes. Periodically check your child's toys for broken parts that should be repaired or thrown away. Check the Consumer Products Safety Commission's website for a listing of recalled toys, [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

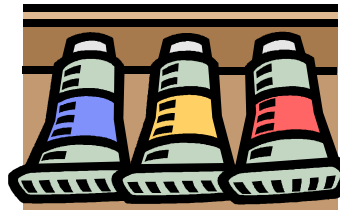
### Protective Gear

If you give a child a bike, skateboard or rollerblades, don't forget the helmet, knee pads and wrist guards.



### Toxicity

Make sure toys do not contain toxic paint or lead. Look for art products labeled with the designation "ASTM D-4236," which means the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist and labeled with cautionary information.



### Size

Consider the weight and size of a toy. A small child could be hurt if a heavy toy fell on them.

### Supervision

Even the most mature child can use an age-appropriate toy dangerously. The best way to protect children is to supervise them as they play.

## County of Loudoun Family Services

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*Giving from your heart  
it is the deepest pleasure  
Warm hugs loving care*



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# Age-Appropriate Toys for Children



Now that the holiday season is fast approaching, no doubt you will be looking to find just the right toys for those special children in your life. Understanding a little about the physical and mental development of children will enable you to better choose holiday gifts for the little ones around you. Toys should help develop and enhance imagination and creativity skills. You want toys that will stimulate the child's mind, stretching the child's abilities, but not to the point where the child becomes frustrated. Here are some basic characteristics of child development at each stage of growth and some suggestions of age-appropriate toys.



During the first three months of life, a baby will enjoy moving, colorful toys, and listening to soothing music. There are many different rattles and musical toys to choose from along with tethers and soft squeeze toys.

Children four to seven months of age, a baby will show increasing interest in shaking, holding, touching and mouthing objects. Manipulating objects to produce movement and noise will begin. This is the time to introduce toys that have holes for easy gripping, baby books made of vinyl or cloth, interlocking rings, floor gyms and activity quilts.



By eight months, an infant will begin to take an interest in exploring the surrounding environment. Motor skills are developing rapidly, and soon they will learn to sit up, crawl, stand and eventually walk. Operating simple mechanisms such as pop-up boxes, musical toys and push-pull toys will provide endless amusement and entertainment.



Children one to two years of age will engage in more active play that includes running, jumping, climbing and exploring. Toys that can encourage these skills are big balls for kicking and throwing, coloring books, building blocks, dolls, miniature lawn mowers, shopping carts, baby strollers and dress-up clothes.

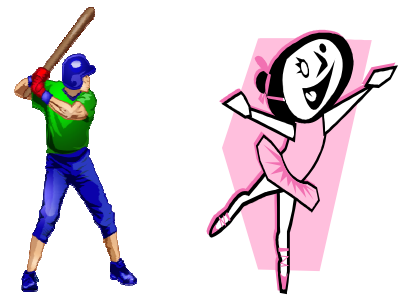


Children three to five years of age will begin to enjoy more imaginative and creative play, building recognizable structures and using smaller more complex pieces. As interactive and communication skills develop, children will begin to show more interest in toys that can be shared with other children, and group play will become important. The preferred toys for this age group are basic musical in-

struments, story books, construction toys, card games, roller skates and riding toys with helmets.



During elementary school, a child will be developing stronger complex muscles with improved coordination and dexterity. Social interaction will become more complex. At this age, children will develop some degree of competitiveness. Activities that involve these skills include sports, music, art and outside play. Early school-age children can safely enjoy arts and crafts at home while using watercolors, blunt scissors and non-toxic glue. Elementary age children also enjoy chapter books, board games, jigsaw puzzles, musical instruments, dancing, bicycles with a helmet and all kinds of sporting activities.



Activities and toys that children enjoy become more diverse, varied and complex as they grow older. Rely on your intuition and experience when selecting toys for children. The surest way to keep kids safe is to make sure they are playing with age-appropriate toys. That includes keeping older children's toys out of the reach of younger children.

## Book Corner



### The Boy Who Would Not Share

By Mike Reiss

Edward, the main character, has more toys than he knows what to do with but insists that letting his sister play with them is completely out of the question. Edward ends up stuck under his mountain of toys which finally gives him the opportunity to see why sharing is so important.



### The Giving Tree

By Shel Silverstein

This is a story about a relationship between a young boy and a tree. The tree always provides the boy with what he wants: branches on which to swing, shade in which to sit, apples to eat and branches on which to build a home. As the boy grows older he requires more and more from the tree. The tree loves the boy very much and gives him anything he asks for. In the ultimate act of self-sacrifice, the tree lets the boy cut her down so the boy can build a sailboat. The boy leaves the tree a stump. Many years later the boy returns and the tree

says, "I have nothing left to give you." The boy replies, "I do not need much now, just a quiet place to sit and rest." The tree says, "Good! A tree stump is a good place to do just that! Come boy, sit down and be happy."

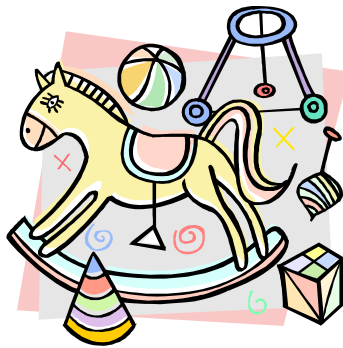


## Things to Consider When Buying Toys for Children With Disabilities

Toys bring parents and children together in play. Buying toys for children with disabilities should be something that gives joy to both parent and child. This list of things to consider when buying toys can help parents know which types of toys are good matches for their children.

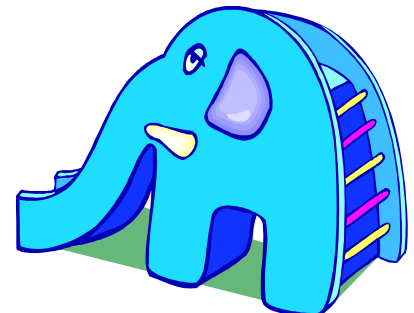
1. **Multisensory appeal:** Does the toy respond with lights, sounds or movements? Are there contrasting colors? Does it have a scent? Is there texture?
2. **Method of activation:** Will the toy provide a challenge without frustration? What is the force required to activate? What are the number and difficulty of steps needed to start?
3. **Where toys will be used:** Can the toy be used in a variety of positions such as on a wheelchair tray? Will the toy be easy to store? Is there space in the home?

4. **Opportunities for success:** Can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong? Is it adaptable to the child's individual style, ability and pace?
5. **Current popularity:** Is it a toy most any child would like? Does it tie-in with other activities like TV, movies or books?



6. **Self-expression:** Does the toy allow for creativity, uniqueness and choice-making? Will it give the child experience with a variety of media?

7. **Adjustability:** Does it have adjustable height, sound volume, speed and level of difficulty?
8. **Child's Individual Characteristics:** Does the toy provide activities that reflect both developmental and chronological ages? Does it reflect the child's interest?
9. **Safety and durability:** Consider the child's size and strength in relation to the toy's durability. Is the toy moisture resistant? Can it be washed and cleaned?
10. **Potential for interaction:** Will the child be an active participant during use? Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?



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### Primary Press

## Teaching Children to Give

It can be tough to teach children the value of giving in a season when we are surrounded by messages about the value of getting. Sometimes a more personal commitment of time to help those in need can be a more meaningful way to teach children to be less selfish and to be more grateful. Help children to see that one does not always have to be paid in order to be of service to others. Here are some ideas to get your children involved:

- Bake cookies and give them to a neighbor in need
- Offer to do yard work for an elderly person
- Walk the pet of a sick neighbor

- Bake dog biscuits or cat treats and deliver them to the animal shelter
- Collect and deliver canned goods for the food bank
- Offer to read to someone in a nursing home
- Help children make gift certificates for "breakfast in bed" or "one free car wash" that can be given to other family members
- Share your hobby with someone
- Tutor younger children after school
- Teach a younger child how to tie their shoes or ride a bike



Start a tradition in which each family member sets aside one of their gifts to give to someone in need. Think of someone without a family: a soldier, a distant relative, a friend in the hospital and write a letter as a family to make the person feel loved and included during the holidays.

Giving allows children to develop a sense of self-esteem and pride. Giving is addictive. It makes you realize that you and your actions are what matters.